THE ROLLING STONES'

ROCK & ROLL CIRCUS

Photographs by Mike Randolph

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The Rock and Roll Circus has always been regarded as a long-lost treasure of rock film history—until now. Here, for the first time, are the official production stills, taken during rehearsal and filming, and featuring Mick Jagger as the Ringmaster.

In 1968, the height of the psychedelic era, BBC television in London commissioned the film for its Christmas season, and the result was *The Circus*, starring The Rolling Stones (the orginal band with Brian Jones) and their guests, including John Lennon, Pete Townshend and The Who, Eric Clapton, Marianne Faithfull, Yoko Ono, and many more.

But the film was never released, and these never-before-published photographs are all that is left of a remarkable project. The film was orginally conceived as a rock concert in the guise of a circus and was shot over an intensive thirty-six hour period. These photographs are a fascinating combination of formal costume shots, performance stills, and intimate backstage details and include previously unpublished portraits of Mick Jagger and John Lennon.

This unique volume contains almost 100 black and white photographs from *The Rock and Roll Circus* and its production—all presented with the full cooperation of The Rolling Stones.

THE ROLLING STONES'
Rock and Roll Circus

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THE ROLLING STONES'
Rock and Roll Circus

Photographs by Mike Randolph

Introduction by Michael Lindsay-Hogg

Chronicle Books • San Francisco

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The Rock and Roll Circus was conceived and financed by the Rolling Stones, and went into production in the closing months of 1968. It was shot in December, the same month that the Stones released *Beggars Banquet*, but after it had been cut together, the band decided that they didn't want it to be released.

The film certainly marked the end of an era for the Stones; the traditional bad boys of rock suffered the first casualty of their generation: shortly after completing the film Brian Jones was dead.

The release of the Beatles' *Sergeant Pepper* in 1967 had an incredible impact; albums composed of three-minute pop songs now belonged in the first half of the decade, and the age of rock projects had begun. Rock had been looking for somewhere else to go, and the high fashion world of psychedelia, which characterized the late sixties, enabled these projects to come into being. Psychedelic experience was perfectly in tune with colourful, fluid and extended projects like *Sergeant Pepper*, *Yellow Submarine* and, later, the Who's *Tommy*.

These photographs are a remarkable record of a project which belongs with all the others; it is remarkable for the combinations of artists working on the film, and because the project is now lost, and these pictures are all we have.

THE ROLLING STONES'

Rock and Roll Circus

Starring . . .

Ian Anderson
Eric Clapton
Roger Daltrey
John Entwistle
Marianne Faithfull
Mick Jagger
Brian Jones
John Lennon
Julian Lennon
Mitch Mitchell
Keith Moon
Yoko Ono
Anita Pallenberg
Keith Richard
Pete Townshend
Charlie Watts
Bill Wyman

The Making of the Rolling Stones' *Rock and Roll Circus*

In those days, there were almost no videos. The only bands who could afford to do them were the most successful. I say 'afford' both in the sense of being able to pay for the videos themselves or persuade their record company to do so, and in a power sense – not many bands could tell the TV plug shows in England, America and Europe, 'We won't appear ourselves. Too much of a hassle. Take this clip or stuff it.'

I'd directed some videos myself: *Happy Jack* with the Who, *Jumpin' Jack Flash* with the Rolling Stones, and later *Revolution*, *Paperback Writer* and *Hey Jude* with the Beatles. I'd also worked with the Kinks, the Animals, the Yardbirds and the Walker Brothers, and had known the Stones since early 1965, when I was directing *Ready, Steady, Go!* My credit with the band was good, which was why, I suppose, Mick said to me one day, 'Let's figure out a television show. What could it be?'

'Any ideas, yet?' asked Keith as he swung into the room for one of our irregular group meetings about the show. 'No. Almost. Soon.' And there we'd sit, in the Stones' boardroom in Maddox Street, the Rolling Stones (including Brian then), our co-ordinator

Jo Bergman, myself and occasional others, chewing over ideas. Some ideas would get more attention than others, but our problem was to find a theme or idea which could collect the Stones together with the musicians – or rather friends – of their choice.

One day, staring at the blank foolscap pad in front of me, I started to draw circles and the word 'circus' came to mind. The Rolling Stones' Rock and Roll Circus. The concept seemed to fit. I called Mick and he quickly weighed up the pros and cons and came out on the pro side. He then went straight on to details; we agreed that a studio design based on a tatty, small European travelling circus would suit the band. By now it was mid November 1968, and we decided to shoot mid December, which would give us time to design the set and figure out who'd be in it.

The thing to remember is that the Rolling Stones were the producers of the show, and as such were the ones who made the choices and the telephone calls. They were not employees; in those glorious days before the need for corporate sponsorship, they were like a studio itself. We could not have got the musicians and acts we did if the project had not been generated from within the community.

I believe there were two reasons for the *Rock and Roll Circus*

happening when it did. The first was that the most violent form of popular entertainment, rock 'n' roll music, was looking for new ways out – not just a record or stage performance – the Beatles had put a stop to those in 1966 – or even a movie, but something more immediate, which combined pictures and music (the Beatles originally wanted their movie *Let It Be* to be made for television).

The second reason was the sense of community amongst the musicians at that time. This was a unique first generation of (principally) young men in their early twenties, who were performing and, for the most part, *writing* their own songs; they were talking about their own view of life – just look at *The Last Time, Help, My Generation* and *Waterloo Sunset*. Audiences now had heroes of their own age, not just one skinny 21-year-old Frank Sinatra or James Dean or Sal Mineo. This was a real movement, something collective – and also deeply rivalrous – that embraced and changed musicians all around the world. It was also a very small community. I remember going into the Adlib Club one night in 1965, and seeing on the L-shaped banquette three Beatles, a couple of Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, assorted Animals, Yardbirds and Pretty Things all talking and drinking together. This close society was fuelled by the gossip of groups splitting, and members jumping to other bands. Things were always on the move. The clubs changed; Keith Moon came along

and everyone wondered how they'd managed before he got into the mix; managers like Kit Lambert and Chris Stamp joined the established entrepreneurs like Andrew Oldham with Eddie, his 17-year-old chauffeur, Brian Epstein, Simon Napier Bell and Chris Blackwell. It was also the very early days of drugs. They were starting to take their toll – someone would fail to turn up for a session or would fall over on stage – but there had been no real calamities.

Everybody loved the Who. They were working on *Tommy* at the time, and they were the first to be asked. Then Mick decided to put a one-off group together for the show, musicians from different bands getting together for a one-time-only performance. His first idea for a front man was Steve Winwood, then seventeen or eighteen but already with that wonderful broken voice. Steve said he was interested, and that's where it stayed for a couple of weeks as we tried to put everything else together; classical musicians (maybe Artur Rubinstein?), dancers (would Nureyev do something?), acrobats, fire-eaters, a whole variety of circus acts, the most colourful mix we could come up with.

On one occasion I went to Paris with a letter of introduction from Mick – a prince to a princess – to ask Brigitte Bardot if she would wear a top hat and spangly red jacket and crack the whip as our

own ring mistress. She sat on the floor of her Paris apartment, wearing a headband and fringed suede jacket, and explained that she had some kind of US deal which prevented her from working for anyone else, so, sadly, she couldn't do it. Sad for us too.

When I got back to England, Mick and I listened to some demo tapes which had been sent in by new bands. In the end we narrowed it down to Jethro Tull, then fairly unknown, and a newly formed, guitar-based band. They weren't really to our taste, so we asked Jethro Tull and turned down Led Zeppelin.

A few days before we were due to go into the studio we became uneasy because Steve Winwood was being elusive – a sure sign that something was up. When we finally reached him he said he was sorry but he was ill and couldn't do it. He certainly sounded hoarse and raspy. So Mick called Paul McCartney, who wasn't free. Then he called John Lennon. Sure. He'd ask Eric. Keith said he'd love to play bass with them and when Mitch Mitchell, the drummer from the Jimi Hendrix Experience, agreed to join in, we had what came to be known as the Super Group.

Julius Katchin, a well-known young classical pianist, agreed to play a piece by Chopin. Dougale Luna, a beautiful American model, came on board as assistant to the fire-eater. I mention

them because they both died young, just a few years apart, as did other members of our happy band.

Finally we got to the studio. The vibrant mix of personalities was exhilarating. Marianne Faithfull was in the make-up chair, with Anita Pallenberg beside her, her long legs up on the table, having some sort of coded conversation. John Lennon had arrived with his son Julian, then about five years old, and Yoko Ono. They hadn't been out in public much before then. One of the circus acts on offer was a pair of boxing kangaroos. Yoko said it demeaned the animals to mimic humans, and that if we used the kangaroos then we couldn't have John. He felt the same, she said. I saw her point. In a trade-off between John Lennon and the kangaroos, John won – gloves off and hands down.

The first day we just went through a desultory camera rehearsal – the whole show would happen on the second day. I got home at midnight and started to eat my dinner, and then the phone rang. It was Brian Jones, who had taken a house just down the road. He was very emotional, saying that no one was paying him any attention, that the rest of the band hated him and he didn't feel he should come the next day. He was not at his best in those last weeks of his life, burdened by his frailty and an absolute inability to cope with alcohol. His only defences were bitchiness and

paranoia. 'No, no. What would the Rolling Stones be without you?' I said, believing it to be true. 'But I can't play any more. It's my wrist. It's not healing,' he said tearfully. He'd broken his wrist in North Africa when he was recording with the Jujuka tribe some months before and it was true that his playing was limited, his wrist weakened by the injury. We talked for about an hour, and he finally agreed to come the next day.

Everyone showed up, more or less at noon, the call time. This was unusual in itself – in those days one of the forms of competition between bands was to see who could arrive the latest, like beauties attending a ball.

We shot the players' entrance several times; all the musicians were dressed in circus costumes, and the audience were wearing bright coloured ponchos, so the whole thing was very festive. Then the machinery of shooting took over. It was going to be a very long day.

The first highlight was the Who, ferocious and concentrated. They performed a mini rock opera, *Rael*, which was a kind of blueprint for *Tommy*. Keith had put some water on his drumkit so that through the camera his splashing solos looked like he was being showered in diamonds.

Marianne, translucent and beautiful, sang a wonderful 'Sister Morphine' in the evening. During one of the many delays, I went back to the dressing rooms to see how everyone was, and just stood in the doorway watching the waiting musicians doing what musicians do – playing and singing. Mick, Keith, John, Brian, Pete, Eric and the others, with guitars, banging spoons on the table tops, clapping their hands and playing blues, do-wop and old rock 'n' roll. I think if I could have frozen any moment from those years, that would have been the one, with everyone there, and happy.

Around 10 o'clock the Super Group went on. John had a chosen 'Yer Blues', and they did it hard and relentless. Yoko was on the stage in front of them, in a black bag, from which she emerged later to do her own version of singing in a jam number, joined by Ivry Githis, the French violinist.

At midnight, Ian Stewart, known as the sixth Stone and the sweetest of men, who also died too young, started to organize the Stones' set-up. This was never quick; it always had to be just right, and this time there were more players and instruments. So it wasn't until about 2 a.m. that the Stones were ready. The long

day had taken its toll. We'd do a take of, say, 'You Can't Always Get What You Want', and then Mick or one of the other musicians would want another take, or I would, and so would our engineer Glyn Johns. And so it dragged on, take after take, song after song. Everyone was getting tired and fractious. At one point Mick, Sandy Lieberson, our producer, and I discussed whether or not we should stop and come back the next day. But Mick thought the band was together, and although he was tired he always had the stamina and dedication of a marathon runner. He said, 'Let's go on,' so we went back to the studio around 5 a.m. to start working on the big song, *Sympathy for the Devil*. We were all wondering how many takes would be needed for this one.

Two. One to get the sound right. And then, in the second take, Mick gave a performance I've never seen repeated, even by him. Like a great actor, he became another person, or maybe just more of himself: seductive, sly, ingratiating, tantalizing, cruel, violent, ecstatic, and finally spent. And the song was over. Then he became just a skinny kid again, and we all looked at him and wondered what it was that had been inside him, and where it had gone.

Michael Lindsay-Hogg, Director
London, January 1991

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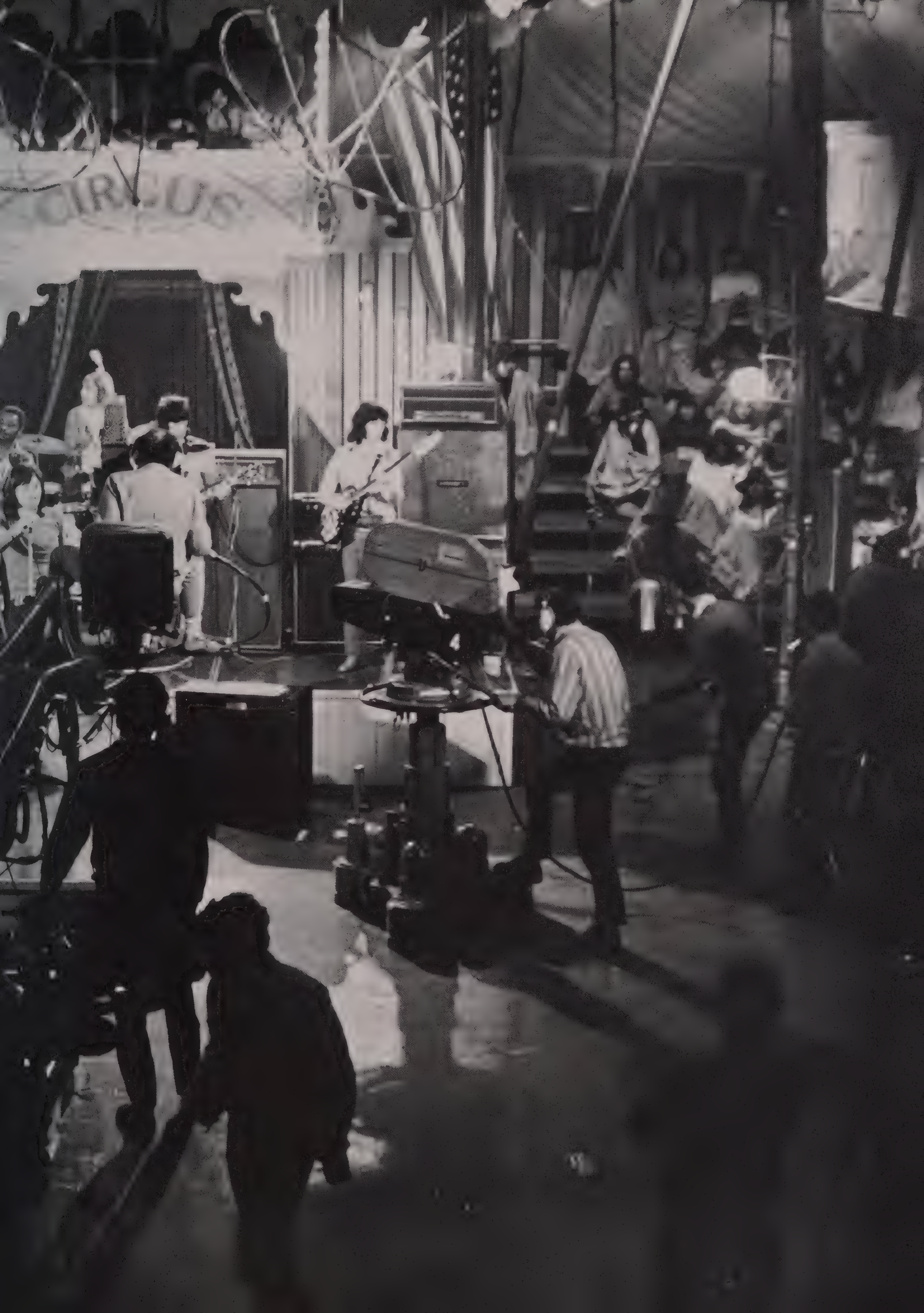
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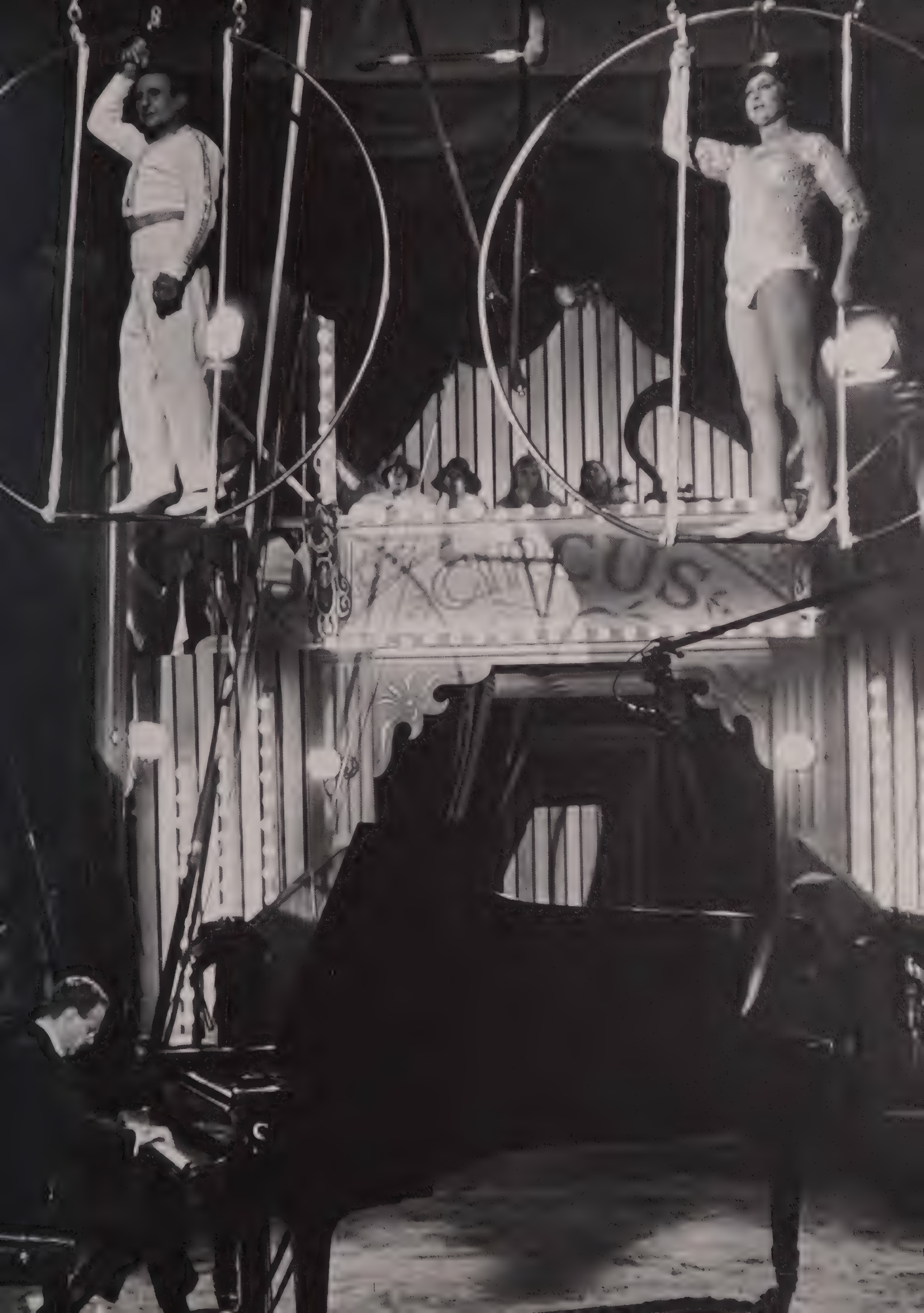

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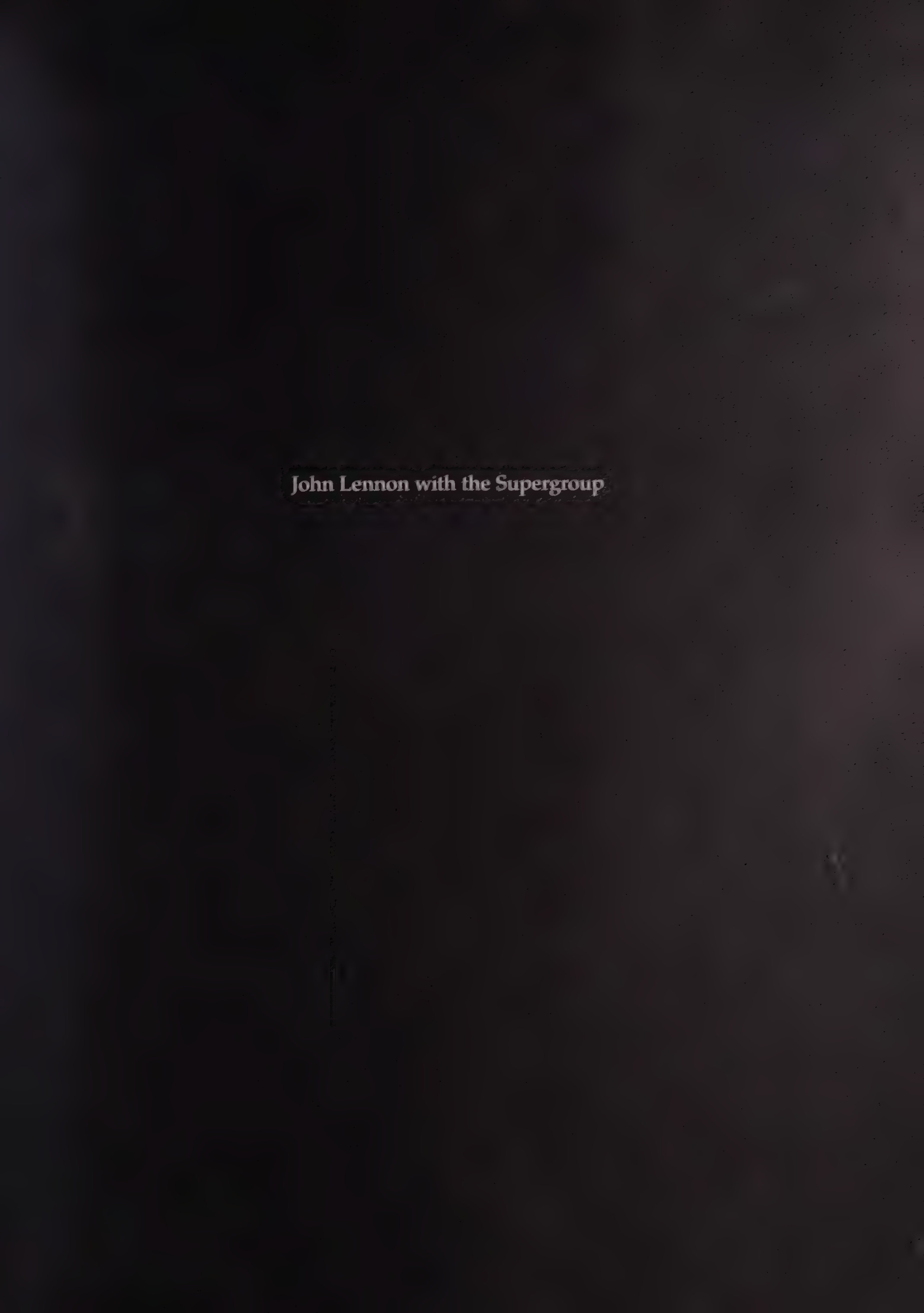

John Lennon with the Supergroup

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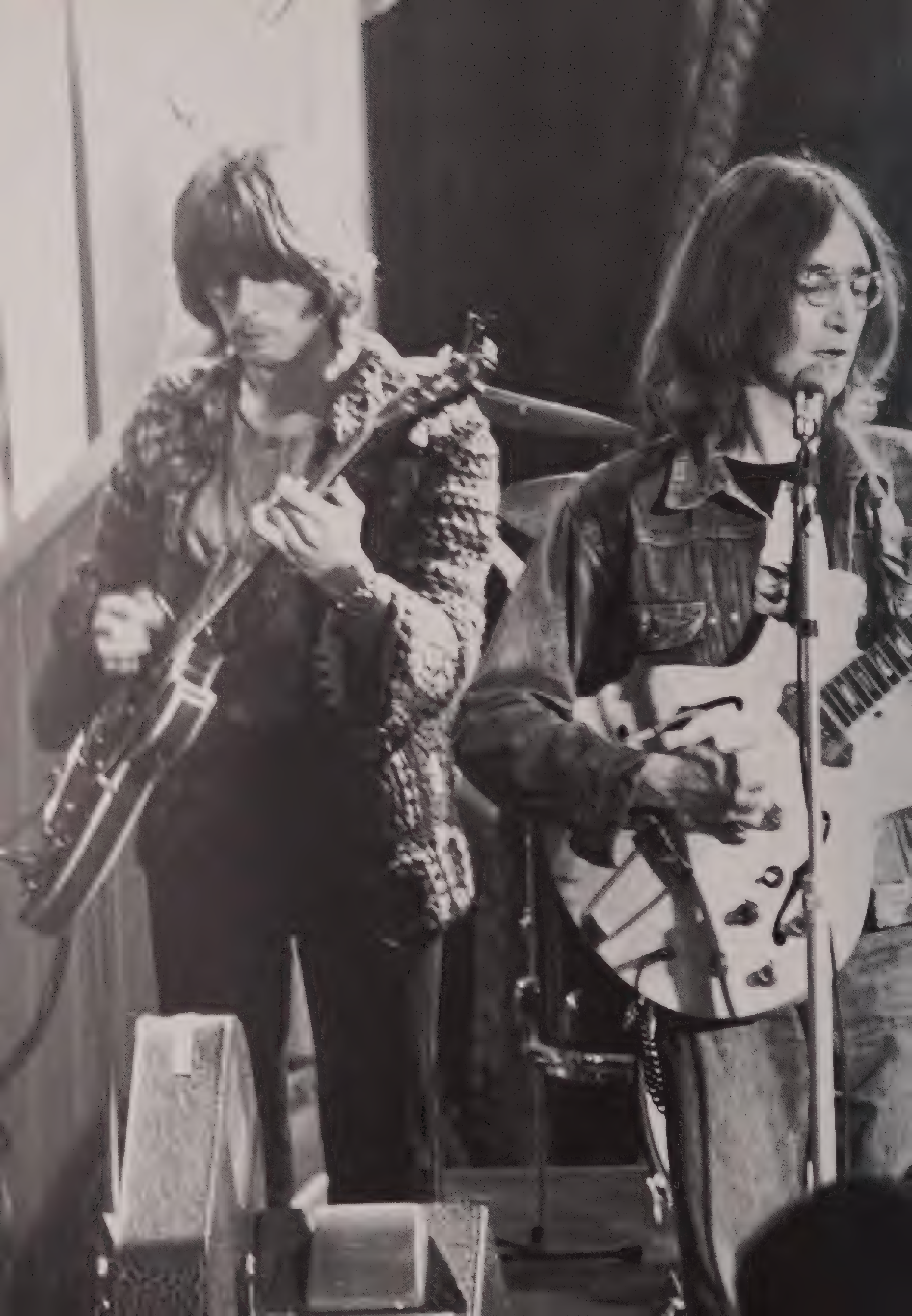

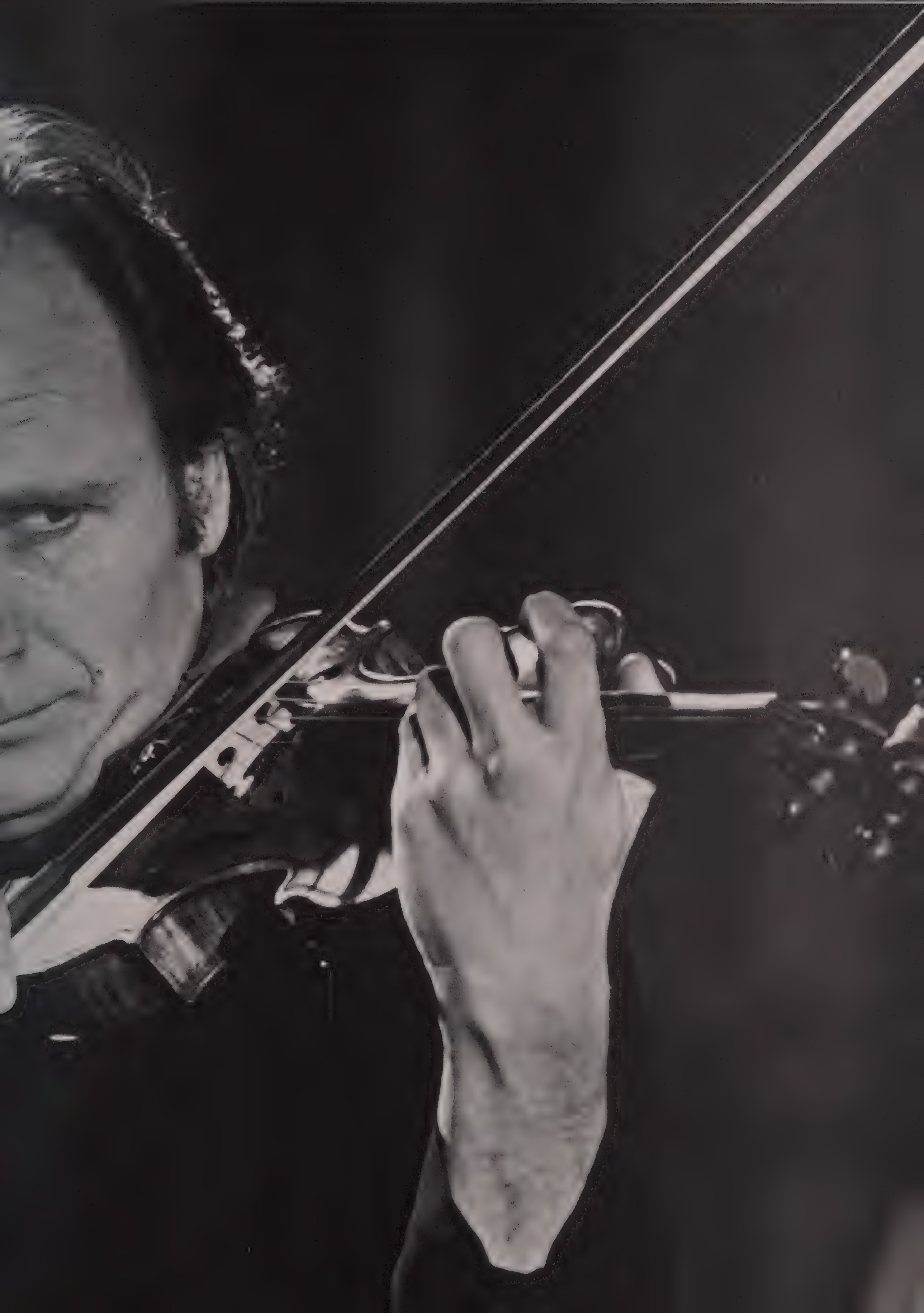

Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones

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The Rolling Stones' Rock and
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Mike Randolph is a freelance photographer. During the sixties and seventies he specialized in working with musicians and taking stills on the sets of such films as *Performance* and *A Clockwork Orange*. He has previously published another collection of photographs, *Led Zeppelin* (1974), by Shinko Music Publishing.

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Marianne, translucent and beautiful, did a wonderful *Sister Morphine* in the early evening. After, during some of the delays, I went backstage to the dressing rooms to see how everyone was, and just stood in a doorway watching musicians do what musicians do—play and sing. Mick, Keith, Brian, John, Pete, Eric and the others, with guitars, spoons on table tops, clapping hands, doing blues, do-wop and old Rock 'n' Roll. I think if I could have frozen any moment from those years, that would have been the one, with everyone there, and happy.

Director Michael Lindsay-Hogg

from The Rolling Stones' Rock and Roll Circus

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